



TYING YOUR FIRST FLY: A WOOLY WORM

by Mark Van Patten



Materials:

Black Thread 3/0
Black Chenille (fine or medium)
Grizzly saddle hackle
Red yarn
Mustad Model 9672 #10 hook

Tools Needed:

Fly tying vice
Fly tying thread bobbin
Half hitch tool or lower half of an ink pen
Very sharp and fine pointed scissors.

This is a very easy fly to tie with some basic instruction. It is best to try this with an instructor or at the very least a book or video on basic fly tying. The Missouri Department of Conservation has a video on basic fly tying that takes you through a step by step process for tying a wooly bugger. This is a similar fly and the techniques used to tie the wooly worm are the same. Once you have watched the fly tied, the instructions provided will make more sense.

After securing the hook into a vice, apply thread to the hook shank. To do this, hold the thread in a bobbin in your right hand. (All instructions are for right handed techniques. Left handed people just reverse hands.) Hold the loose end of the thread in your left hand between your thumb and index finger. Hold the loose end in position and begin to wrap the thread around the shank of the hook with your right hand. Start your wrap immediately behind the eye of the hook. As you make your wraps, advance toward the rear or bend of the hook. Wrap over the loose end of the thread you are holding in your left hand. This will secure the thread to the hook shank. Once you have trapped the loose end of the thread by wrapping over it, hold the remainder of the loose thread up and over the hook shank at a 45 degree angle. This will create a ramp for each wrap of the thread to slide down next to the last wrap. Continue until you have covered the hook shank with a layer of thread wraps. When you reach the point on the hook shank where your thread and bobbin are directly above the point of the hook, stop. It is now time to tie in the materials for the fly.

All materials will be tied in at the exact spot on the hook shank that your last wrap was made. First, tie in the grizzly hackle by the tip. The tip is the opposite end of the feather from where the feather attaches to the bird. Lay the hackle tip along and on top of the hook shank, holding it in your left hand. Make sure the materials to be tied in are tied in so that the bulk of the material is extending to the left or back and away from the hook. It should look like you just tied in a very long tail. Use your right hand to bring the thread up towards you and rotate the wrap direct above the hook shank. You should have a 90 degree right angle with the thread and the hook shank. Move the thread back to where you can pinch it between the thumb and index finger of your left hand. (You should be holding the hackle with your thumb and index finger of the same hand.) Be sure to apply constant pressure to the thread to keep everything tight. After you pinch the thread tightly in your left hand fingers, rotate the thread away from you, around the hook shank, and down. Once the thread is directly below the tie in spot, pull it tight

allowing the thread pinched between your fingers to slip down onto the hook shank and trapping the hackle tip. Do this two or three times until there are at least three wraps of thread holding the hackle in place. Do the exact same thing with the black chenille. Note: To reduce the volume of material tied in at the same spot, strip the end of the chenille, for about 1/4 inch. This will allow you to tie in only the core thread of the chenille. Once the hackle and chenille are tied in, it is time to tie on the tail. Tie in a piece of red yarn using the same technique used for tying in the hackle and chenille in the exact same tie in spot. Once it is secure with at least four or five wraps of thread, you can cut off the excess leaving only 1/4 inch of red yarn extending back and away from the bend of the hook.

Advance the thread toward the front of the hook. That is the end with the eye. This is where you will need the thread next time you use it. Make nice even warps forward until you reach a point behind the hook eye. You must stop one hook eye length behind the hook eye. Let the thread hang down. Allow the weight of the bobbin to keep pressure on the thread so nothing has a chance to loosen. Now you are ready to do the final assembly work on this fly.

Take the loose end of the chenille in your right hand, and begin to make wraps around the hook shank advancing toward the hook eye. Always wrap over the hook shank and away from you and under toward you. If you were to look at the direction of the wrap from in front of the hook it would be in a clockwise direction. It is important to make all warps in the same direction. Once you reach the point where your thread is waiting on you, switch hands. Take the loose end of the chenille in your left hand and your thread in your right hand. Hold the chenille stationary and make two wraps behind the chenille then two in front right next to the chenille. This will secure the loose end to the hook shank and not let it come unwrapped. It is extremely important from this point on that you never allow the thread to loose tension. That is all that is holding your materials in place. The next step is to bring the hackle forward in the same manner. However, you will not make side by side wraps. Instead you will palmer the hackle. Palmering is wrapping but allowing a space between the wraps. Instead of side by side wraps, space your wraps at least one thickness of the chenille you used. This allows the fish to see the body through the hackle and see the suggestion of segmenting caused by the hackle wraps. When you reach the point where you trapped the chenille with the thread, do the same thing with the hackle. Once the hackle is secure, make a few extra wraps in front of the hackle, behind the eye of the hook. Let your thread hang down with tension from the weight of the bobbin. Use scissors to cut off the excess hackle and chenille. You are almost done. The fly should look like the picture at this point.

Use a half hitch tool or an old ink pen to make a number of half hitch knots behind the eye of the hook. A half hitch is very simple. Hold the thread in your left hand. Remember to keep tension on the thread at all times. Take the lower half of an ink pen in your right hand. With the thread pulled toward you and held securely in your left hand, lay the end of the ink pen where the point is on the thread at a 90 degree angle. Use your left hand to come up and over the ink pen making a wrap around the pen. The thread should have wrapped over itself at the same time. Keep tension on the thread. Move the ink pen toward the eye of the hook. Slip the point of the pen, (the writing end) over the eye of the hook. If the ink pen hole is too small just press it against the front of the eye of the hook. Pull the thread tight with your left hand and allow the thread to slip off of the ink pen and onto the hook shank directly behind the eye of the hook. Repeat this procedure at least 5 times. Cut off the excess thread. You need to coat the thread behind the hook eye with either some fly tying head cement or clear fingernail polish. This will keep the half hitch knots from unraveling during a fishing trip. Your fly is complete. Congratulations! You have just tied your first fly.